

# Minneapolis Arts Commission (MAC)

## Executive Committee Retreat

2/23/22

### Goals for meeting:

Executive committee taking time for long-term brainstorming, no specific outcomes planned

### Attendees:

Commissioners: Joan Vorderbruggen, Lana Aylesworth, Mandi Bedbury, Jeff Swinton, Lucy Thompson

City staff: Mary Altman, Tina Beech

## Intentions and goals

- Lots of uncertainty — start with intention about what we can accomplish
- We know what we're capable of and value we can add to a city process
- Bridge-building — what basic tools we have, where to firm up relationships
- Onboarding process and establishing relationships with new director
- Aspirational goals, put aside political constraints for now, think about next 3–5 years
- Artistic freedom to brainstorm, big blank canvas
- Goal to build, mentor, provide support system for new department coming in
- Knowns = who commission is, amazing skill sets, how we make a difference
- Envision what MAC can be with new department
- Strong mayor could be new opportunity for impact — don't have to wait for new director

## Discussion topic: Development of new department

### What value add can MAC bring to the development of the new department?

- Commissioners come from variety of wards, backgrounds, roles — bring networks of friends, family, colleagues, social media capital
  - MAC = microcosm of passionate neighbors in city who wish for arts and artists to thrive
- Engaging MAC = engaging huge ecosystem of people, ability to provide leadership and expertise
- Bring ideas and raise issues that city staff can't
- Coming together from community perspective — we are community members who chose to get involved, constituents of city officials in addition to advising
  - Value add = continuing to grow community connections
- Goal to show MAC presence at community events

- MAC = lobbyists for arts, voice of the community — actively engaging the city on behalf of the arts community
  - How can MAC be involved in selection of new director? — selection committee, recruiting candidates once job is posted
- MAC has working knowledge of city process and how things get done = advanced skill that average community member doesn't have, can leverage that and delegate activities
- Go through duties of new department as described in ordinance, clarify how MAC's work intersects with that, clarify how to be of service
- No way a director can accomplish everything right away — help them prioritize for most impact, make this a democratic process, engage the community
- Poet laureate = slam dunk, easy to implement with big potential impact
  - So much behind-the-scenes, non-exciting work to set up department — poet laureate project would be a success coming out of the chute
- Create blurb to clarify what MAC provides to city — educate incoming department, council members, etc.
  - Told council member to keep MAC top of mind as new department is formed and in arts conversations in the city in general
- Want to assert early on that MAC has a voice in the process
- Fact that MAC exists and has so many connections, skills, and desire to help = huge asset, should align with department's goals
  - People power
  - Thought leadership
- Strong chance that new director comes from outside government — MAC has experience developing and implementing policy, can educate them on what policy is and potential impact
  - Opportunity for revising existing policies as well as shaping new ones

#### **How can MAC engage the public in this effort?**

- Access and Engagement subcommittee could prioritize this effort, with support from rest of commission
- Have started establishing relationships with arts organizations and key players
- Work with network of neighborhood organizations that already have meetings, city council members attend these
- Engagement with arts orgs = another value add ahead of new department
- Be more visible at arts events — MAC could have a table, survey attendees, explain what MAC is and opportunity with new department
  - Open Streets, FLOW, Art-a-Whirl, city-sponsored events
  - Get 1–2 solid talking points, have handout that people want to hold onto
  - Plan ahead, be strategic about which events are important to show up at
  - Used to do something similar with MAC pins — bowling shirts, magnets, other takeaways?
  - “Did you know” framing: “Did you know we have an Arts Commission?” “Did you know there's a new city department for arts and cultural affairs?”

## **Barriers?**

- Don't know who's choosing new director, hierarchy or points of engagement
  - There is a job description
  - CM Jenkins has some involvement as leader of internal workgroup
  - Rebecca is policy aide appointed to arts, imagine she has some role
  - Need to speak up that MAC wants to be informed and part of the process
- Limited capacity, workloads growing and getting more sophisticated — need to recruit more commissioners
  - Plan to focus on wards with no current representation in tabling at events
  - Can also engage CMs on nominating people from their wards

## **Strategic next steps?**

- Value add, prep for new director
  - Prioritize duties of new department and director
  - Plan for community engagement around new department
  - One-pager to show MAC's role and how we can support city
- Publicity and engagement
  - Revisit surveys — discussion item for general MAC meeting
  - Calendar of arts events, recruiting volunteers during general meetings
  - "Did you know" handout for general public
  - Recruitment process for new commissioners

# Discussion topic: Long-term planning

## **What is MAC's value proposition more broadly – to City leaders, in our neighborhoods and to artists?**

- Tying power of the arts to city and neighborhood agendas — sense of place, revitalization efforts
- Artists — supporting artwork, finding funding
- Keeping artists connected to other city functions, like Parks and Public Works
- Could be a lot more grant funding coming into city
  - MAC could support by showing that we are a diverse body in advisory role for city — adds value for philanthropy, could help with prospecting
- Commissioners' terms are longer than council members — value of longevity in building relationships, seeing initiatives through
  - Can continue to push for agendas after CMs leave
- Need to advocate for more funding to make MAC and new department's work successful and sustainable
  - Part of why MAC should be involved in bringing in new director — they will need guidance on how to advocate for more funding
- What are options for funding arts at city level? Independent revenue stream?
  - Legal to raise money through selling branded items, for example? — yes, there are city-owned assets already like Convention Center

- Example: Minneapolis Parks Foundation raises money for parks
  - Can set up contracts to give artists portion of revenue
  - Potential to leverage city as think tank for projects — city could facilitate applications for funding through something like NEA or Bloomberg, where a local org gets the funding
- New director should be able to creatively seek funding and explore new sources
  - Part of MAC wanting input on that search
- Tie arts with other city initiatives — where do arts fit in with rent control, public safety, environment?
  - Connects back to MAC having clear messaging both to city and public

### **What could be some aspirational goals for the MAC that are 3–5 years out and why?**

- Pipeline / recruitment process for new commissioners
  - Find ways to connect initially with low barrier to entry
- Pursue funding and institutional support to embed an artist on city staff, following St. Paul City Artist model
  - More than 5 years out?
  - See what happens with strong mayor, new department and director
  - Get better at role around diversity, equity, and inclusion
  - City has had Artists in Residence — have heard feedback that there were too many small requests, not able to commit to larger initiatives
  - See value in someone being paid with city budget, on staff, part of core discussions and not an add-on
  - Could look at past versions of this to learn from, make more formal
  - Will watch the politics, but in meantime, can push for understanding of artists' role in city-building
- Presence at every large arts event in city
  - Ties to growing understanding of MAC + recruiting commissioners
- Get in with arts players who have money and influence, offer them connections to groups they don't always reach — mutually beneficial bridge
  - MN State Arts Board funding — can see who gets most money
  - Invite leaders of these orgs to MAC meetings
  - Explore how these orgs are connected with city already, how funding from their city is circulated back into Minneapolis
  - Connect individual artists working with these “big five” orgs — facilitate conversations with artists alongside orgs' leadership
- City boards and commissions working collaboratively
  - Example, knowledge sharing around equity, recruiting and retaining commissioners
  - Adds value to MAC

### **Barriers?**

- Barriers to commission participation: volunteers, can't be compensated

- Any other value, like college credit, that could incentivize marginalized community leaders to participate?
- Field scan — look at what other cities do for equitable participation
  - Potential to work with someone to conduct that scan — class at Humphrey?
  - CURA — could probably write a research grant
  - Forecast — public art collection equity audits

### Strategic next steps?

- Build recruitment process for commissioners
- Explore revenue streams and options for sustainable funding
- Connecting to largest, most powerful arts orgs
  - Invite leaders to MAC meetings
  - Look at how these orgs receive city funding and are accountable to community
  - Facilitate conversations with individual artists alongside “big five” orgs
- Learning from other boards and commissions
  - Connect and collaborate with other Minneapolis commissions
  - Field scan of how other cities support equitable participation

## Final thoughts

- Ready to get going on action steps — now figure out how to support with resources and our own volunteer time (“We’re the interns!”)
- Lots of passion, creativity, ability to get stuff done — city is lucky to have us

## Immediate next steps

- Email to CM Jenkins to request to be involved in director search — **Lucy will draft**
- Review notes and look for other strategic next steps
- Keep long-term planning as a standing agenda item